

stain also ; but we may surely infer from it this much—that God could never have enjoined John to act on a principle that in itself included any objectionable element, that did not, in all respects, accord with every attribute of His character. It is indeed true, that we are not warranted in regarding ourselves as bound to obey all the commandments which, for special purposes, were considered binding on the individuals to whom they were first addressed ; but of this we may rest assured, that if there be any principle mentioned in the Bible with commendation, that principle may by us be embraced with safety, in the perfect assurance, that if we are not obeying a specific command, we are at least doing that which cannot be productive of any evil consequences.

Let it, moreover, be borne in mind, that we have not, as some have been bold enough to insinuate, become total abstainers because the Rechabites and Nazarites were total abstainers. If that were our ground, then we might be asked the pertinent question—Why do you not conform to all the rules and laws by which these orders were respectively regulated? All that we contend for is this—that the fact of these societies being sanctioned by God, proves that the principle of total abstinence, viewed abstractly, and although not inculcated by direct and special precept, has eminent biblical examples in its favour ; and that these examples could not be set forth as they were, did its adoption involve the infraction of any moral precept.

But, if we are still pressed by our opponents to put our finger on a distinct and positive command, we simply answer—that if such passages are often quoted are to be unequivocally regarded as being irrelevant to the point in dispute, then we turn upon our opponents, and declare, if you reject total abstinence on the ground that it is not expressly sanctioned, then, if you act consistently, if you carry your principle out, the axe by which you prostrate the stately tree of abstinence, must, with equally destructive effect, be brought to bear on the entire array of our benevolent institutions.

But others object to the principle, on the ground that extremes are dangerous, and that temperance, if acted upon, will accomplish the same purpose.

Now, we will not insinuate that temperance, in contradistinction to abstinence, is, in the abstract, objectionable. Had men continued to partake moderately ; had they acted rationally in regard to drink, as they had in regard to other articles of consumption ; were there no greater temptation to partake immoderately of wine, than there is to partake of milk, then total abstinence societies would never have been instituted. *Already* has the adaptation of the temperance pledge been put to the test. *Already* has experience, the best of all instructors, taught the decided superiority of abstinence to temperance, whether viewed as a cure or as a preventative.

But if we are to have a discussion respecting the comparative merits of the two systems, we must come to a distinct understanding with regard to the meaning of terms. When we use the term abstinence in regard to drink, no one can misapprehend our meaning. When our opponents use the term temperance, it is with a degree of latitude which they themselves never venture to determine. Dr. Alexander, of Edinburgh, in a recent number of the *Congregational Magazine*, justifies the temperate use of wine, on the ground that it produces 'innocent hilarity.' But if the doctor were asked the question—How much wine is necessary to produce a given degree of hilarity? being a learned man, he would probably reply that the quantity of wine would require to be regulated by the constitutional temperament of the person partaking of it. Thus a nervous lady, or one who, like Mrs. Mantalini, was all soul, would require one glass. This for a short time would, according to an acknowledged law of her constitution, cause pleasing hilarity. By and by, however, one glass would lose its effect, and the lady would, of course,

be justified, in order to restore the 'hilarity' which the doctor so much admires, in taking two glasses, instead of one. The man of phlegmatic temperament—that jolly gentleman with the round head, and short neck, and large lustrous eyes, whose diameter is equal to his circumference, discards his bottle of port or madeira after dinner, without causing the mercury of his hilarity to rise to Dr. Alexander's favourite point ; but the jolly gentleman must not by any means despair. He may persevere ; for drink is intended to produce innocent hilarity!

So much, then, regarding a few of the objections offered to the principle. A word, now, respecting their constitution and character.

If abstinence be sanctioned by Bible example ; if abstinence be the best, the most effectual preventive against intemperance ; if it be the most effectual cure—and we judge of its remedial character by the number of cures it has already effected—then, who is prepared to prove that combination for the purpose of diffusing it is not justifiable? In banding ourselves together for this purpose, we are not only acting on the universally admitted axiom, that 'union utters strength ;' not only acting in accordance with the dictates of enlightened reason ; but we are also discharging an important duty, as well as obeying the very promptings of instinct. The same beautiful law by which the lower animals become gregarious ; by which men constitute themselves into communities ; to the active operation of which we owe this populous city ; that principle to which Wallace and his co-patriots conformed, when, for the purpose of expelling the common enemy, they welded themselves together, is the one upon which we act when we unite for the expulsion of a tyrant, who triumphantly sways his iron sceptre ; a tyrant by whom millions of the human family are enslaved ; and to propitiate whom, millions of the public money are expended.

But our constitution has been objected to, on the ground that a solemn vow lies at the very foundation of it. We deny, however, that we necessarily come under a vow in signing the pledge. A vow, considered in reference to a pledge, supposes the calling of the Deity to witness ; but in signing the pledge we do no such thing. We come under a solemn promise, or obligation, but not under a vow. The pledge is just as unexceptionable, in that respect, as any bank-note can be. In the one case, John Gray promises to pay ; in the other David Robertson promises to abstain ; and as John Gray is morally, and in honour, bound to pay, so is David Robertson morally and in honour bound to abstain. If an individual can, with a clear conscience, promise to partake of a good dinner on a given day, he may, without doing violence to the inward monitor, promise to abstain from alcoholic drinks for ever.

The charge of a desire to supplant the gospel itself, has been brought against us. This is a very serious charge, and it ought, in all instances in which it is preferred, to be substantiated by satisfactory evidence. That unguarded expressions have been occasionally used, we do not deny. That much damage has been done to our cause by injudicious advocates, we readily grant ; but the men who keep aloof from us on that account, should, if they would maintain consistency, refrain from making a profession of Christianity for a similar reason. When we succeed in making men temperate, we do not profess to have succeeded in making them Christians. Temperance of itself can never produce a change of heart—does not even necessarily lead to it. A temperate man may be below zero in point of moral character. But whilst all this is true, who can deny that intemperance is one of the greatest barriers to the reception of the gospel? In a report on the state of religion, submitted to the Assembly of the Free Church, on the 28th May, by Dr. McFarlane of Renfrew, due prominence is given to intemperance, which, in the language of the report, 'stands in the